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Agriculture, Mining, Forestry, and Fisheries

Allotments and Small Holdings in Oxfordshire: A Survey Made on behalf of the Institute for Research in Agricultural Economics, University of Oxford. By ARTHUR W. ASHBY. (Oxford, England: The Clarendon Press. 1917. Pp. 198.)

This work was written by Mr. Ashby while research assistant in the Institute for Research in Agricultural Economics in the University of Oxford, and its publication was preceded by prolonged, careful personal investigations, as the writer of the present review can testify from personal observations when in 1913 he was accompanied by the author in an inspection of allotments and small holdings in Oxford itself and those parts of Oxfordshire lying near Oxford. Mr. Ashby has also had the advantage of studying in the United States and visiting farms both in our country and Canada, giving him a broad basis of observation for his conclusions.

While all American students of economics know in a general way what allotments are, perhaps many of them would find a definition difficult. Mr. Ashby after quoting several definitions formulates the following definition of allotments when considered from the economic point of view: "The economic meaning of the term as used from 1820 to the present time is a small parcel or plat of land occupied by a working man and constituting a subsidiary source of income in addition to his wages."

Allotments are a part of the general ideal of the Englishman with respect to land, says Mr. Ashby, for it has been felt in the past that in England the landless man engaged in agriculture is an anomaly. The head of each family should have some connection with the land, some "nexus," to use Carlyle's word, other than that of mere wages. This did not mean full ownership, as a rule, but rather possession and use on payment of a rent so moderate that the small parcel of land would supplement wages. The reasons for allotments as a part of English land policy have been various, political and social as well as economic.

Mr. Ashby traces in a general way the history of allotments in England and in a very exhaustive way in Oxfordshire. The history has been a varied one, not altogether a cheerful one, but such as to lead to the conclusion that with all their ups and downs, allotments must remain at least a minor part of any wisely thought out land policy for England and probably somewhat similar arrangements must be included in wise land policies of all modern nations.

Allotments supplement wages; they are most frequent where wages are low and increase in time of depression. Where, as in the north of England, agricultural wages are relatively high, the allotments play a smaller rôle. Nor do allotments form, except rarely, rungs on the agricultural ladder leading to farm tenancy and still more rarely to farm ownership. In short, the man with utopian aspirations and magic formulas will despise them; but the man who keeps his feet on solid earth realizes that they have made many thousands of lives of poor people better and fuller than they would have been otherwise, and have helped to give England her food supply. For the rest of this somewhat complicated but important history the reader must be referred to Mr. Ashby.

Allotments are usually garden plats and in 1887 in England and Wales there were 131,204 allotments under $\frac{1}{8}$ of an acre; the next most numerous class, consisting of allotments between $\frac{1}{8}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre, comprised 116,355. Until 1887 an allotment could not exceed two acres in extent, but since that time the limit has been extended to five acres. The legal definition as given in the act of 1887 is as follows: an allotment is "any parcel of land of not more than two acres in extent, held by a tenant under a landlord, and cultivated as a garden or a farm, or partly as a garden and partly as a farm." The tendency is here seen to make an allotment approximately a small farm and the amended law making possible the extension of an allotment to five acres strengthens this tendency. The small holdings, on the other hand, may roughly be described as small farms with an area varying from 1 to 50 acres. It thus seems difficult on the border line to distinguish between allotments and small holdings. But the general idea of the small holding is that it is to yield a livelihood to a family or to help the holder upward on the agricultural ladder to the possession (not usually ownership) of a family farm or even a large farm. The small holdings have played and still play their rôle in English agriculture, but it is a modest one. Again the writer must refer the reader to Mr. Ashby's book for details.

One of the surprising things is the resemblance between the problems of land settlement in England and in a new country like the cut-over lands of northern Wisconsin. We find, for example, in England, as well as northern Wisconsin, the problem of the horse used only a part of the time and "eating his head off." The small man must be afforded some other means of doing his work. One

arrangement that is often successful in both the old and new world is to have a central office as a demonstration farm to furnish needed animal power.

In both England and Wisconsin we find the marketing problem, which the small man with difficulty is able to solve. In short, everywhere we discover the need of leadership and find that successful settlement of the land by new men or along new lines by the ordinary man is dependent upon the brains and capital of those who are far stronger and wiser than the average man. Economic democracy as political democracy is successful in proportion to the excellence of leadership.

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NEW BOOKS

BOLLINGER, C. *Cotton production in the United States.* (Memphis, Tenn.: The author. 1917. 10c.)

BULLARD, W. I. *Quest of the long staple cotton.* (Boston: Merchants National Bank. 1917. Pp. 31, map.)

CROOKES, W. *The wheat problem. Based on remarks made in the presidential address to the British Association at Bristol in 1898.* Revised with answers to various critics. Third edition. (New York: Longmans. 1918. Pp. xvi, 100. \$1.25.)

KELLOGG, V. L., and TAYLOR, A. E. *The food problem.* (New York: Macmillan. 1917. Pp. xiii, 213. \$1.25.)

KIRKLAND, J. *Three centuries of prices of wheat, flour, and bread.* (London: National Bakery School. 1917. 3s.)

MCLEISH, J. *The production of iron and steel in Canada during the calendar year, 1916.* (Ottawa: Dept. of Mines, Mines Branch. 1917. Pp. 50.)

NOURSE, E. G. *Outlines of agricultural economics. A class-book of questions and problems.* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press. Pp. 95. 1917. 50c.)

Although intended primarily for use with the author's *Agricultural Economics*, a book of selected readings, Professor Nourse has aimed to make the questions in this companion volume general enough to be useful to teachers and classes using other reading. The questions, of which there are 40 or 50 for each chapter of the larger volume, are clear and so worded as to necessitate definite answers. In a rather unfortunately large proportion "yes" or "no" might be given instead of a reasoned discussion. In addition to these questions, the answers to which can be found, in the great majority of instances in the readings, there are six or eight problems on the general subject of each chapter. Most of these are